Leadership in COIN Operations

"An Old Concept in a New Age or Delegating to the Point of Discomfort"

Purpose

- To highlight the unique challenges of leadership in a COIN environment.

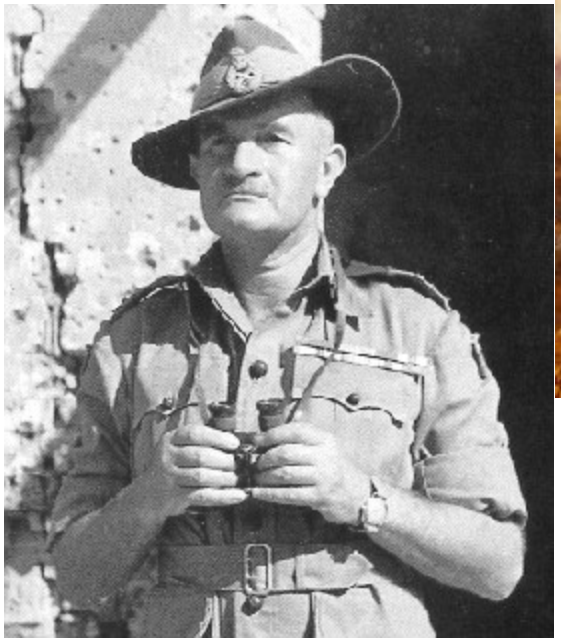
Areas of Discussion

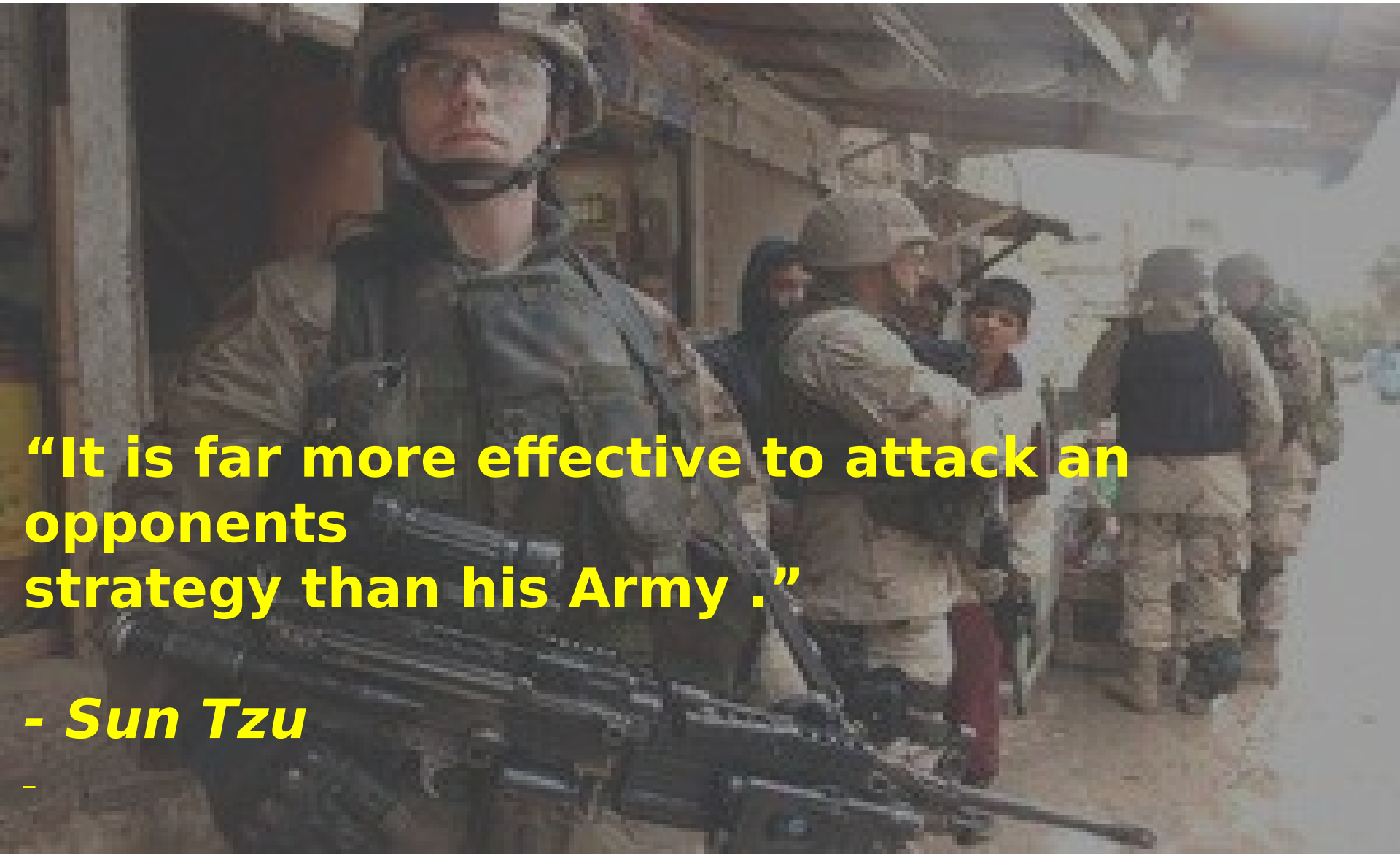
- Traditional Leadership
- Insurgent Strategy
- The moral/ dimension of Counterinsurgencies
- Conventional VS COIN Environment
- Leadership Issues in Coin
- The ABCs of COIN Leadership
- Suggested Best Practices

Leadership Traits

What are the traits of a great leader?

- Competent
- Honest
- Selfless
- Trusts his/her Subordinates




“It is far more effective to attack an opponents
strategy than his Army .”
- Sun Tzu

Fighting to the T…an

What the Taliba…:

- Chase illiterate teen… countryside (waste th… hours on sweep operat…
- Kill them inside villag… damage.
- Make cultural mistak… minds.
- Lose sight of our gam… will.
- Get tired and go home.

The New York Times

An Ambush in the Taliban Heartland

Members of an Afghan squad and a Dutch platoon took fire from the Taliban insurgents in Uruzgan Province, an isolated area of Afghanistan.

By C. J. CHIVERS April 10, 2007

SURKH-MURGHAB, Afghanistan, April 4 — Capt. Abdul Rakhman peered over a chest-high mud wall as gunfire and shouts rose. Beside him were two Afghan Army soldiers and a Dutch marine. A few yards away another Afghan soldier knelt in the dirt, reloading a rocket-propelled grenade.

The patrol was stuck, enveloped in a poppy field in a Taliban ambush. Automatic rifle fire came toward them from a tree line about 175 yards to the west and from a row of mud-walled Afghan houses to the east and north.

The captain and Sergeant Leendert, a Dutch marine and the squad's senior adviser, had dashed here when the shooting began six minutes before, leading an Afghan squad to cover.

Now neither side of the wall was safe. Bullets smacked the dried mud beside them; the rest of the squad was lying exposed in the field. Taliban fighters were on both flanks. More bullets whirred by, but many missed, as the Taliban demonstrated remarkably poor marksmanship against an enemy they had surprised.

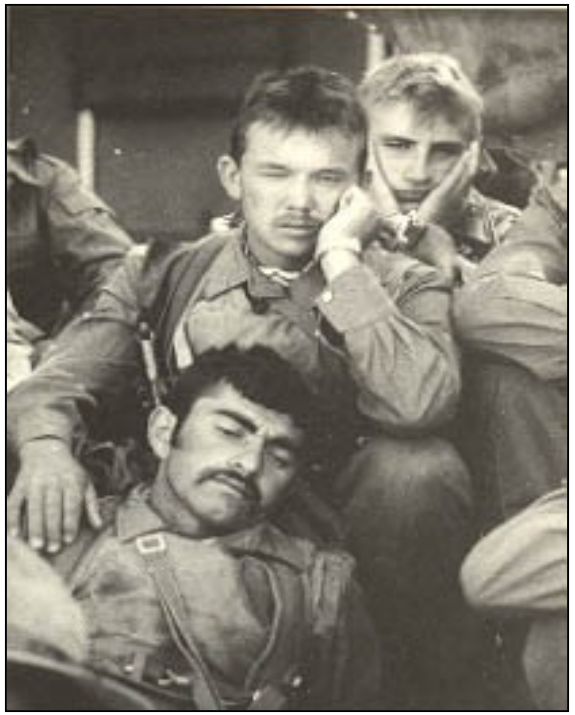
The marine turned toward a building. "O.K.," he said. "Go! Go! Go!"

The squad began to fall back.

This intense firefight, across poppy fields and against a fast-moving group of insurgents, began a 38-minute withdrawal under fire from a village out of the Afghan government's control, like many here in the overwhelmingly Pashtun provinces of central, southern and eastern Afghanistan.

- "The core of the difficulty is neither military nor political but moral."
  - Martin Van Creveld the "*The Changing Face of War*" 2007

Russian forces
1980



Russian forces
1989

"When a child is killed in one of these villages, that village is lost for 100 years. These places run on revenge."

Pakistani diplomat, ICG Report, August 2003

burning Taliban bodies, Koran desecration, Abu Graib, Iraq

COIN Failure Ireland 1922

counter-terror program matching terror for terror. Reprisals are taken against the population, homes are burned, crowds are fired upon. The IRA are battled to a stalemate, but the British public abandons the fight sickened by what they had

1916 but fail. Key leadership escapes and the IRA begins a renewed insurgency, with better training, tactics and intelligence

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE

IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

COIN Success Story Ireland 2007

training strict discipline, high professionalism, and superb leadership". Martin Van Creveld the "*The Changing Face of War*" 2007

The British did not alienate the people……by the mid 90's the IRA had begun to experience difficulty in new recruiting to replace those who had been killed or jailed or left of their own accord."
Martin Van Creveld the "*The Changing Face of War*" 2007

Conduct of Troops During Operations

Rules of Conduct:

1. There shall be no confiscation whatever from the poor peasantry.
2. If you borrow anything, return it.
3. Replace all articles you damage.
4. Pay fairly for everything that you purchase.
5. Be honest in all transactions with the peasants.
6. Be courteous and polite to the people and help them when you can.

Mao Tse-tung,
1928

Leadership Issues in COIN

- Commanders and other leaders will be challenged by the unique demands of counterinsurgency.
- In-depth understanding of the operational environment is an absolute necessity to recognize who is the enemy, when and where to fight, and when other activities are

Traditional Leadership Environment

- Shoot
- Move
- Communicate

Technology as the force multiplier

COIN Leadership Environment

- Presence
- Patience
- Persistence

Afghanistan

Afghanistan 2004

"*It seems this place hasn't changed very much since Kipling. This place is like the last frontier.*"

Private Gary Holt 1-87, 10th MD

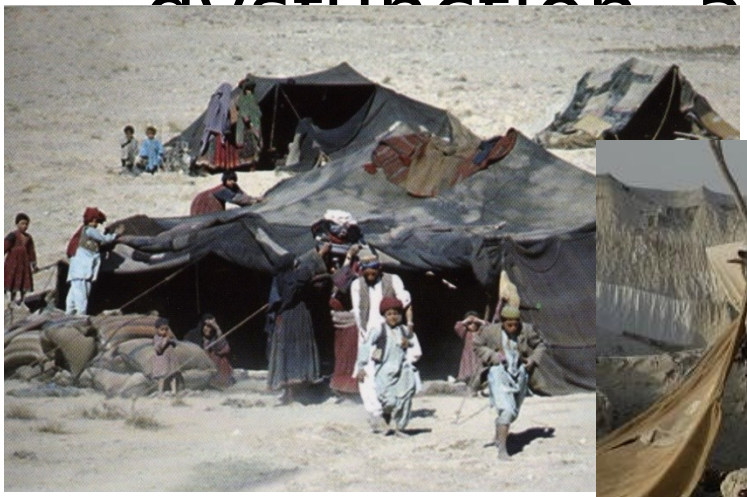
gress can be made, e

What to expect in a COIN Environment

- What you'll see
- What you'll be doing
- What you'll think

What you'll see

- Leadership challenges that never surfaced in pre-deployment preparation
- Third world squalor, disease, dysfunction, animosity



Stressors

- Exposure to a strange and unfamiliar culture
- Work with people whom you don't understand and who don't understand you
- Work with forces outside of your unit with whom you have had little exposure or experience
- Work with NGOs, IO and HN organizations
- Jobs that you think are outside your MOS/career field

Other Players

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES
DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS

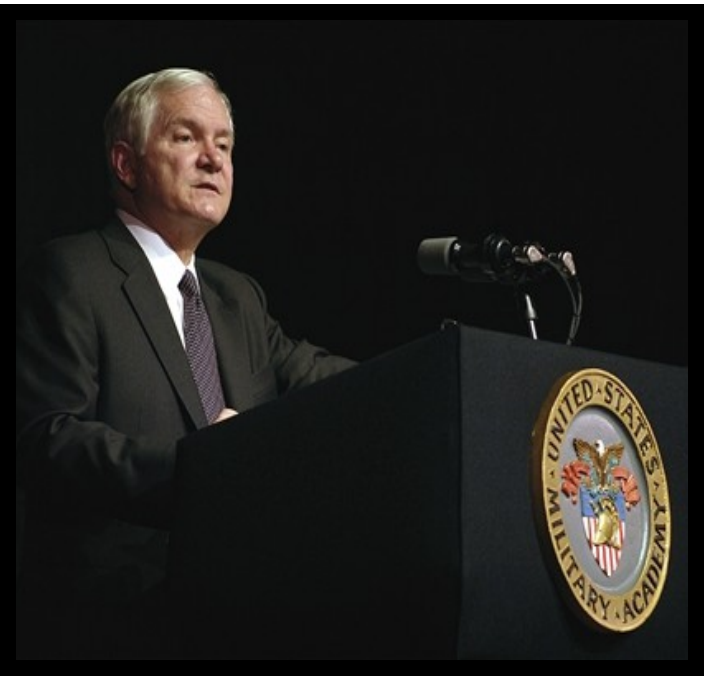
USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Preconceived Notions

- Technology is king
- I'll never get it
- Nothing can be done
- HN soldiers/police/civilians are lazy/stupid/corrupt
- The unit you RIP are idiots

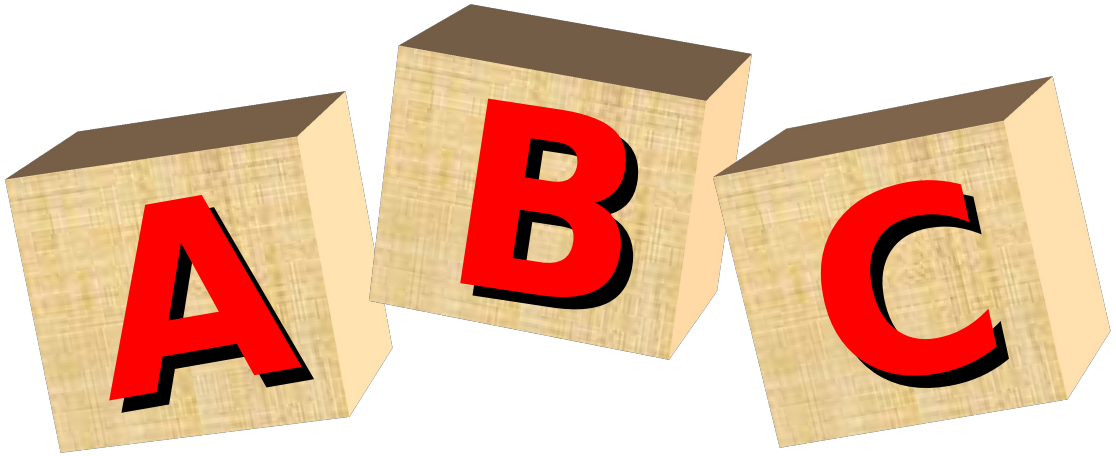
The Era of Persistent Conflict



"The Army will need leaders of uncommon agility, resourcefulness and imagination, leaders willing and able to think and act creatively and decisively in a different kind of world and a different kind of conflict than we have prepared for over the last six decades"

-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

The ABC's Of COIN Leadership



Adaptive

Balanced

Creative

Adaptive Leaders

Culturally Attuned
Situationally Aware
Active Communicato
Critical Reasoners
Full Spectrum

"On a recent afternoon, he … checked on refurbished water pumps for farmers and approved money to connect the pumping station … there were soccer uniforms to be dropped off for a community team, heated disputes to

Balanced Warriors

Personal Balance

Experiential Balance

Creative Thinkers

Innovative
Problem Solvers

"They give us a chunk of land and say, 'Fix it," said Captain Rich Thompson, 36, who controls an area east of Baghdad.

- NYT 3/21/08

The Company Fight

"The complexity, unpredictability, and ambiguity of postwar Iraq is producing … company grade officers who are accustomed to operating independently, taking the initiative, and adapting to changes. the Army must now acknowledge and encourage this newly developed adaptability in

Best Practices

- “Delegate to the point of discomfort”
- Task and purpose
- Don’t stand in the way of a solution
- Resource to succeed
- Do less, mentor more
- Professional development
- Underwrite reasonable risk

Best Practices

- Be a role model for you troops and HN
- Be ethical, you set the tone
- Get out amongst your soldiers, the people in your AOR
- Be agile and adaptive
- Be self aware/360 degree assessment

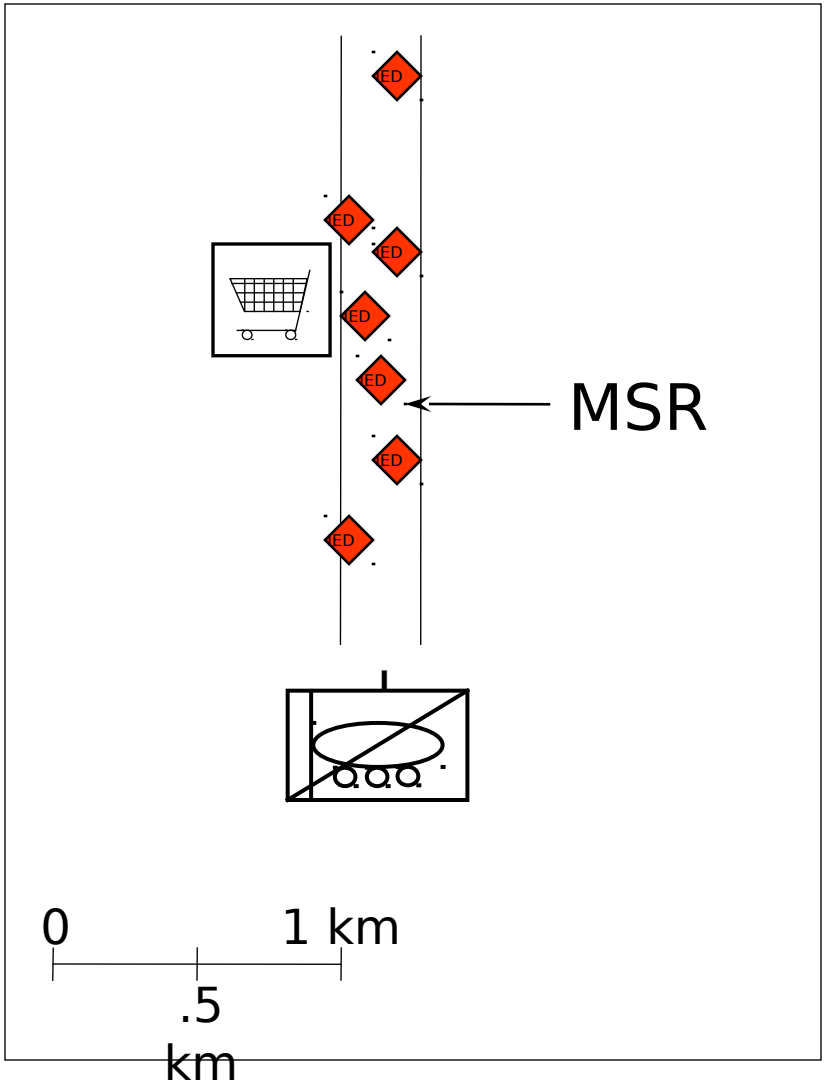
Questions?

Leadership in COIN

Tactical Decision Game

Scenario

A market bordering the MSR that supplies your company is the site of increasingly frequent IED attacks. You have canvassed the merchants, but none claims to have seen anything, even though some attacks have occurred in broad daylight. Your company wants to take decisive action. How do the operational environment and leadership principles influence your course of action?



Scenario

Your unit operates area of operations with a strong Al Qaeda presence and few host nation forces. An insurgent leader approaches, requesting amnesty for his fighters in exchange for information. You know that this insurgent leader is responsible for the deaths of soldiers in your unit and units that preceded you? What do you do?

One Solution